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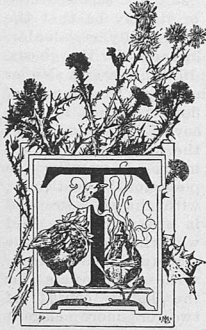
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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

THE TABLE.

BY MRS. S. A. B. PUTNAM.



a delicate stomach or a sensitive appetite. A sense of disgust

HERE is no department of the household in which the character of the householder is more clearly revealed than in the table, and this not more in the viands than in the appointments. We are all aware of the difference in influence upon the appetite in a table in which neatness and order prevail, as opposed to the slipshod and careless methods that sometimes obtain. In the latter it requires a stomach insensible to conditions to support the natural desire for food; while the former acts as a tonic, the desire for food asserting itself despite the lack of inclination for enjoying the pleasures of the palate which frequently accompanies

only indicative of a refinement of taste and purity of thought, but as promotive alike of contentment and health.

The habits of life in different countries differ in none of the appointments of living more than in the methods of taking food. Among some the eating merely to live is the practice; others seem to live only to eat, the gross sensualism developed in an overfondness for the delights of the stomach, debasing and weakening the intellect, while depraving and brutalizing the moral nature.

THE DINNER.

It is to the dinner, however, as the principal meal of the day, that, among all civilized people, chief thought is given. The dinner calls out all the resources of taste and elegance in its ordering, as well in the laying of the table as in the viands which are to constitute the feast. A white cloth is admitted by connoisseurs in the appointments of the table to be at the same time the most elegant and the most tasteful that can be used for dinner, not only because of the purity of effect so grateful to the palate, but as supplying the most pleasing grounding for relief in the furnishing and decoration. Yet it must be confessed that, in regard to the table-cloth, taste has become somewhat corrupted, an apology being found for this in the many elegant manufactures of table damask in which colors have been



TABLE DECORATED FOR A PINK DINNER.

Pink Chrysanthemums, Pink Shades, Pink Ribbons, Pink Candy. Silver in Louis XVI Style. Exhibited at the Madison Square Garden Flower Show by William H. Bower & Sons, Floral Artists, New York.

is engendered in the one; in the other a zest is experienced which amounts to delight. With the linen immaculate, the china and the glass faultlessly clean, and the silver and cutlery glittering, it matters not that the repast consists of a few simple dishes, the appetite asserts its natural office, and a wholesome sense of pleasure is found in the food.

But the exceptions understood do not affect the rule, and neatness in the ordering of the table must be considered as not

introduced. There are fashionable dinners distinguished by a keynote of color; and this caprice, doubtless, is the outgrowth of the splendid manufactures of table-damask in linen-and-silk, or of silk-faced linen, which have been produced in both white and colors. Thus we have dinners with the linen in gold color, the china in white with gold decoration, and the color scheme carried out in floral decoration of water-lilies, field daisies, or some other golden-hearted blossom. In dinner tables laid with

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pink silk-faced damask, the scheme of color is carried out in china of pink decoration and floral decoration of pink roses, carnations, trailing arbutus, hyacinths, pink lilies or chrysanthemums and so on; a distinctive color characterizing the ordering of the table.

The decorated central square, or tidy, is sometimes supplanted on the dinner table by a scarf which reaches from the soup tureen in front of the hostess to the *piece de resistance* which has place in front of the host; or which reaches very nearly the entire length of the table. In questionable taste, it must be said, these squares and scarfs are as often in silk, satin, plush and velvet (and occasionally in cloth-of-gold) as of linen, the richest embroidery ornamenting them, and the finest laces and even ribbon bows seen as trimming. In preference, for the purpose understood, though also regarded by certain connoisseurs in dinner-giving as of faultless taste, the mirror for the centre of the table may be commended. There is certainly no objection that can be urged against the delightfully embroidered linen tidy, as the substituting for the *épergne*; while plush, velvet and tinsel cloth, however sumptuous in effect or rich in ornamentation and finish, are manifestly incongruous in the place. In defense of the table mirror there is the sanction of many years in both foreign and American families; and in the historic mirror in which the ladies of our presidential mansion have seen themselves reflected on court occasions through many administrations—perhaps from Mrs. Washington to Mrs. Harrison. A pleasing conceit in the laying of a table has form in a mirror surrounded by greens in imitation of a lake, in the centre of which swims a great white china swan, burdened with the fruits and the flowers, tiny cygnets here and there on the glassy surface bearing the posies intended for the guests at the dinner.

Set floral pieces of characteristic significance, as for instance arrangements supporting a flag, a harp or an heraldic device, in compliment to the guest honored in the entertainment, are also *en règle*; but as they bear the impress of the florist rather than the happy touches of the hostess, they are only pleasing when they embody the compliment referred to, or some specific idea.

Beside the bouquet for the ladies, and the little button-hole

nosegay for the gentlemen, it is now customary, in giving a fashionable dinner, to provide for the ladies less perishable souvenirs of the occasion, these dainty little remembrances having form in exquisite little pieces of china or satin-covered boxes filled with the finest bonbons; or it may be that the souvenir is a piece of jewelry or something equally as valuable.

The individual posies, or the flowers intended for the guests, are variously arranged upon the table. In some cases a slender crystal vase or a small cut-glass globe, holding a tiny bunch of

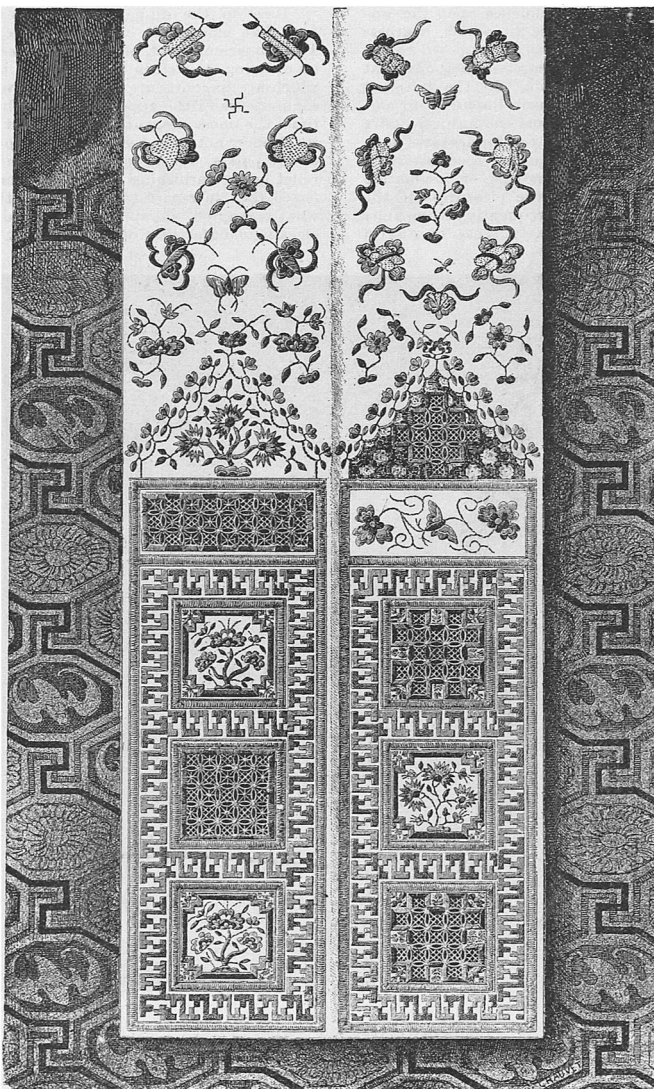
flowers, stands at each cover, in the midst of the wine glasses; but more frequently the posies for the gentlemen, with the ends wrapped in silver foil, are laid with their cards at the places designed for them, while the flowers for the ladies consist of two or more elegant roses, or some other fine flowers, cut with long stems and placed loose at the ladies' covers. Or the gentlemen's flowers are tied with narrow ribbon and those intended for the ladies are tied with rich satin ribbon three inches wide, with the ends a yard in length.

Should the table be of more than twelve covers, additional floral decorations may be placed toward each end, and for dinners of less ceremony or for everyday dinners, a potted plant may be placed in the centre of the table instead of the more elaborate decoration of cut flowers. Ladies who delight in an elegant and refreshing table grow maiden's-hair and other ferns, dracaena, dwarf-palms and other suitable plants for table decoration, concealing the homeliness of the common red earth pot in a larger handsome china vase.

The decoration of the dinner table accomplished, crystal or cut-glass dishes of salted almonds as an appetizer, crystallized ginger, crystallized calamus, and dried apricots or figs, or any other desirable conserves, are placed around the central piece; and at the ends are compote dishes filled with nuts; or a pair of dishes at each end are filled alternately with nuts and

fruits—almonds, English walnuts, pecans and filberts being the favorite nuts for the table, exception existing in favor of our native hickory nuts, which, if used, must always be cracked before placing on the table.

It is usual to decant claret, sherry, port and Madeira wines for the table, and to serve them in elegant bottles or jugs; and



CHINESE EMBROIDERED WINDOW CURTAIN.

to guard against stains, the bottles are set in silver coasters. Connoisseurs of sensitive palates, however, insist that all wines should be served in the bottles in which brought from the cellar; that decanting injures the flavor; that the dust, the mildew and the cobwebs of the cellar may be merely wiped off and the unsightliness of the bottles concealed under the napkin of the butler. Champagne, sometimes *frappé*, but generally only served with ice, Sauterne, Chablis, Chateau Yquem, and the general line of white wines are poured from the bottles in which they are put up for the cellar. The flavor of the red wines is thought to be brought out by slightly warming them, and in this case they are not decanted. Water is also placed on the table in handsome bottles, and the coasters come in again as security against soiling the table cloth.

The table thus far arranged, the ladle for the soup is laid in place, the silver knife and fork for the fish, nut-crackers beside the nut-dishes, the small oyster-fork with the fish knife and fork, two extra knives and several forks, a soup-spoon, a tea spoon for the *sorbet* (which comes in after the roast), a dessert-spoon and teaspoon for the ice cream, are placed at each cover—the knives at the right and the forks at the left hand, with the spoons at the front. At each cover there are also placed a goblet for water, with the glasses suitable for each course of wines, the napkin with a thick slice of bread hidden within its folds laid between the knives and forks; and if there be room, a small plate of bread is laid at the left of the forks.

For the dinner *à la Russe* there is no carving done, nor is the soup brought on the table, but every course in its turn is served from the butlery or from a side table by the butler, the carving done before the roasts are presented to the guests. But in the dinner *à la Française*, which is much more popular in America, and which is provided for in the foregoing remarks, the soup is set before the hostess and is served by her, and the roast and the game are set before the host for carving, while, if not proficient in this accomplishment, the dishes are set for a moment before the host, that the eyes of the guests may be refreshed by sight of the sirloin of beef, the saddle of southdown, the turkey or the mongrel goose, pheasants or canvas-back ducks, and then removed, that the butler may the more skillfully

do the work of the moment. Carving, when dextrously performed, is an elegant accomplishment; when bungled it becomes a source of distress. An expert carver, by sticking the carving fork across the breastbone of a turkey, goose or other fowl and holding the fork firmly in place can dissect the entire bird without removing the fork, while there are gentlemen so skillful in the use of the carving knife that they can lift a capon, a duck or a pheasant on the fork, disjoint the legs and the wings and strip the flesh from the frame with a grace which elevates the performance almost to the dignity of art.

To rise from the seat in carving is a most unfortunate expedient for the performance. But that carving may be well and easily done the butler must be enjoined to see that the carving knives are properly sharpened. Certain vegetables are served with each course, and with a cook who understands the art of cooking condiments on the table are almost superfluous, as the necessary seasoning is done in the preparation of the dishes. Yet a dinner table would seem incompletely furnished without salt and pepper, these appearing at the corners of the table or individually at each cover.

With the pudding and the ice-cream despatched, the finger bowls are introduced with the fruit plates, and here appears a chance for the display of the beautiful and delicate little napkins known as *dolies*, upon which so much and so great a variety of the fancy work of ladies has been recently expended. There seems indeed scarcely limit to design and daintiness in these cunning little napkins. They are seen in silk, satin, linen, muslin and damask, enriched with the most delicate painting and embroidery, and trimmed with the finest laces—in the point laces, crochet and drawn wools, in the knitted Madeira and

the Faya work, in every material and in every decoration possible. They are placed upon the fruit plate underneath the finger bowl, and while exceedingly pleasing among the minor fancies of the appointments of the table they are ornamental rather than useful.

The fruit indulged in, the ladies retire to the drawing-room, leaving the gentlemen to discuss the wine, the nuts and the post-prandial cigar with the latest outcome of politics or stocks, to exchange stories and anecdotes and otherwise to while away an hour in social enjoyment, finally joining the ladies for the



RENAISSANCE BUFFET IN BLACK WALNUT, BY QUARTARA OF TURIN.
DRAWN BY LAMBERT & STAHL.

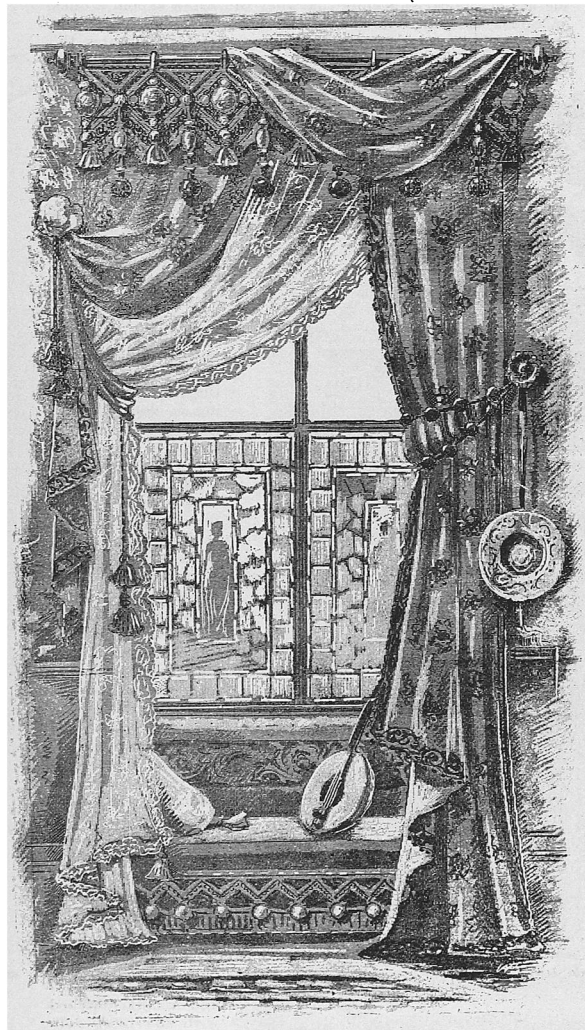
THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

coffee and the cordial which finish the dinner. A dinner of ceremony without the assistance of a well-trained butler is not to be considered.

All elaborately-ordered fashionable dinners are now served from a *menu*, or, in a more democratic term, a "bill of fare,"

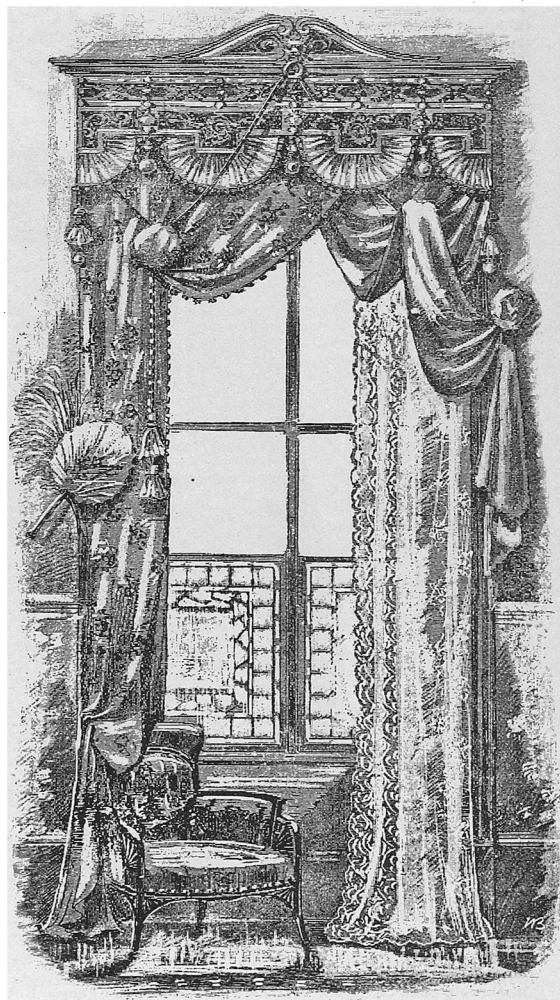
elephant soup boiling, a farmyard scene, a picture of a poultry yard, a hunting scene in which figure deer and grouse, a grotesque picture of a salad mixed with lobster and lettuce objectively, a scene showing the lifting of a great, smoking English plum-pudding from the boiling pot, a picture of a dainty ice-cream party, a delightful scheme of flowers, fruits and nuts, a picture of a coffee plant with an Arab coffee picker, each scene introducing certain accessories of the course indicated. *Menu* painters ought to take rank with fan painters, the ludicrous which frequently enters into the devices furnishing most agreeable subject for pleasantries round a table.

But *menus* of the kind described are exceptional, and cannot be produced but at an expense which places them beyond the reach of all save the exceptionally wealthy, so that more simple cards are the rule. Very beautiful *menus* are those printed on



A DECORATED WINDOW RECESS.

and some of these *menus*, the work of artists who make of them a specialty, in character and device, in a measure enter into the realm of high art. A *menu* that can be quoted is done on silk paper in the device of a small folding fan mounted on sticks of white celluloid, the panache at the left side at front showing the interlinked monograms of the host and hostess in rich, illuminated letters, that at the right side the date of the dinner in illuminated numerals, with each fold illustrating *en caractère* a course of the dinner. A second artistic *menu*, done on the finest ivory board, is a set of tablets bound in Russia leather in delicate gray, and turning on a rivet of silver, the monogram, in large, interlinked letters illuminated in gold on the front and the gold-illuminated date of the dinner on the back, the courses of the occasion illustrated in a fishing scene, an East Indian



FASHIONABLE WINDOW DRAPERY.

a sheet of celluloid, the courses of the repast in illuminated printing. A *menu* card is laid at each cover, and forms a pleasing souvenir.

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER costs \$4.00 per year.